

Revenge

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Revenge

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Part 1

"Oh, I will help you, if that's what you really want. But are you certain you want my help?" Jareth slowly walked around the twosome in casual inspection. "I haven't forgotten the last time we met, and, truth to tell, I'm still upset at how it ended." His circling ended abruptly, and he grabbed Sarah's chin to turn her face to meet his own. "If I help you now, mere words aren't going to wipe clean the debt owed, and the stakes will be much higher. Think about it, Sarah! Consider my warning carefully before committing yourself." That said, he released her and continued his circling of the living sculpture.

> "I don't care! Just get me away from this man," Sarah cried desperately.

> "Very well." And just like that, the would-be rapist, frozen in time since Jareth's appearance, disappeared. Sarah collapsed sobbing onto the floor, her arms no longer held in her attacker's iron grip. Jareth walked up to her, and from his towering position, he spoke. "There will be no child's rules this time, Sarah, and the labyrinth to be solved is more than a mere physical construct." He flicked his wrist, pulling a peach out of the air.

"Here."

> Still shaking, Sarah held out her hand, into which the peach was dropped. She examined it suspiciously through red, bleary

eyes before looking up questioningly at Jareth. "Eat it," he ordered. Fresh tears steaming down her cheeks, Sarah did as ordered, slowly biting into the fuzzy skin and tasting the sweet juices, frowning at the bitter aftertaste. Soon, as before, the world started to dance before her eyes and she was overcome with a great drowsiness. As Sarah slipped into unconsciousness, Jareth pulled a crystal ball out of the air, and it grew until big enough to encompass the Goblin King and the sleeping woman. Carefully taking Sarah up into his arms, Jareth stepped through the wall of the crystal, and they gently floated off to another world.

Part 2

"Come on, Lady. Wake up! You can't sleep all day." The goblin pushed and pulled at the edge of the mattress impatiently, hoping to disturb the woman sleeping upon it. "Wake up!" he repeated, desperation edging his voice. "The King will get angry if you don't wake up."

> "Only at you, Hedgebain," came a cool voice from behind the frantic goblin. The goblin whipped around in terror, trembling at the sight of the Goblin King casually leaning in the doorway. "Must I do everything myself around here," sighed the Goblin King in disgust. Shooing away the goblin, he bid him to fetch Sarah's breakfast, "Which had better be ready," the king added, the threat implied by his tone of voice prompting the goblin to trip over his feet in his haste to escape the room. Pushing the goblin out of his mind, Jareth turned his full attention to the woman on the bed. At all the commotion she had begun to awaken, and Jareth walked over to the side of the bed to wait impatiently. Finally she raised her hand to rub away the crust from a long night's slumber and opened her eyes.

> Confusion washed over the woman as she didn't recognize where she was. Seeing the strange man standing to the side, staring at her, she was hit by a momentary panic. All he did was stand there, though, making no moves toward her. The mouth was set in a slight frown, and the eyes looked so cold and calculating. Glancing around, she realized that he was the only person in the room with her. Forcing her panic down, she propped herself up into a sitting position and began in a hoarse voice, "Where--" She stopped and cleared her throat, starting over more clearly. "Where am I?"

> The frown was replaced by a smile, although the woman wasn't sure about the authenticity of it. "You're in my castle, of course." The confusion on the woman's face didn't diminish one bit at that piece of information. She was about to frame another question, when at that moment, the goblin reappeared in the doorway, holding a heavily laden tray. "Sire?" it inquired timidly.

> Jareth turned around, and seeing the food, motioned for the goblin to bring it to the bed. It quickly became apparent the goblin lacked the height necessary to complete his task, so the Goblin King bent over and grabbed the tray himself, placing it carefully over the woman's still covered legs. "I hope you find something here to suit your palate," he offered graciously. "After last night, you must be famished."

> "Last night?" As tempting as the foods smelled, causing her stomach to loudly rumble in anticipation, the woman paused in reaching for the tray, fully engaged in trying to remember the previous night. Try as she might, she could remember nothing prior to waking up that morning. 'I can't even remember my name!' she

realized. Turning to the man still standing beside the bed, she asked, "Who am I?"
> "Sarah Williams, of course!" he laughed. "It appears you have a touch of amnesia. No worry, though, it will certainly pass." His voice turning more serious, the Goblin King continued, "It is probably better you don't remember. Had I arrived one minute later..." His voice trailed off, hinting at all sorts of nasty possibilities in that one unfinished sentence.
> "So we know each other?" asked Sarah uncertainly.

> "Yes, we do. You visited my kingdom many years ago. Considering the details surrounding your departure, I was quite surprised to receive your call for help last night." The Goblin King began to pace the room. "It was probably nothing more than sheer desperation," he sighed dramatically. "And I'm sure that once you feel better, you'll be wanting to return home. Still, it is nice having you here for awhile, at least. Being eternally surrounded by goblins, the odd visit by a human--especially one as enchanting as yourself--is most welcome."
> Sarah didn't know how to respond to that confession. Considering the generous hospitality he was showing her now, it didn't seem polite to inquire what had happened when she last visited, either. "Might I ask what happened last night?" she asked cautiously.
> "Yes," Jareth smiled. "You may. But why don't you finish your breakfast first, and then get dressed. There's no reason to hurry things, for time here does not run concurrent to your world. In the meantime, you have some visitors who are very anxious to see you. We can talk more later."
> "Visitors?" asked Sarah, surprised that anyone she knew would be visiting her here of all places.
> "Yes, friends you made during your last visit to my kingdom." He paused. "If you don't mind, I could have them shown in right now," he offered.
> Curious what friends she could have made in a land of goblins with human-looking royalty, Sarah agreed to meet them immediately. With that, Jareth disappeared. Alone, Sarah picked and nibbled at the breakfast, trying her hardest to pick the lock on her memory. It was no use, however, and when a goblin finally appeared, escorting a dwarf, a one-eyed fox, and a huge, hairy beast, Sarah almost screamed. "Sarah!" exclaimed the dwarf, running to her bed. "Fairest maiden!" exclaimed the fox, not far behind the dwarf. "Sar-wah fr-iend," lowed the beast, also lumbering toward her. Remembering the Goblin King's assurance that these were her friends, Sarah fought down her urge to bolt out of the bed and run out of the room. "Hello?" she offered hesitantly.
> "Sarah? Damn that Jareth! He's done something to you," decided Hoggle.
> "Jareth?" The confused look on Sarah's face made Hoggle pause in his anger, concern over his friend's immediate health taking precedence.
> "Yeah, Jareth. You know, the Goblin King. Tall fella, lots of hair."
> "Fairest maiden, art thou feeling well?" queried Sir Didymus.
> "I feel fine," answered Sarah curtly, bristling at their concern. Immediately ashamed at her tone with her 'friends,' though, she admitted, "I'm just having a little problem remembering things."
> "Oh, that sounds like Jareth all right," fumed Hoggle.

"Come on, we have to get you out of here," and he grabbed Sarah's hand to pull her out of bed on her way out of the castle.

> "No!" Sarah grabbed back her hand, much to the chagrin of Hoggle. "I'm not going anywhere."

> "Maiden, I must agree with Sir Hoggle," interrupted Sir Didymus. "Thou dost not appear to be acting thy usual self, and his Royal Highness the King has been known to employ less than honorable methods."

> "Sar-wah?" added Ludo.

> "No," repeated Sarah. "I'm not going anywhere. No matter what has happened in the past, the King...Jareth," she added uncertainly, "has been nothing less than gracious to me thus far. I won't repay his kindness by running off for no reason."

> "Kind?!" exclaimed Hoggle. "He must have really enchanted you a good one. After what happened last time, you shouldn't be worrying about being rude to him!"

> Frustrated at their nagging, Sarah fought to keep her temper. Instead, she concentrated on filling in the important details locked away in her memory. "What happened last time?" she asked evenly.

> "Don't you remember anything at all?" Sarah shook her head. Hoggle snorted in impatience, then resigned himself to the fact Sarah wouldn't be leaving with them at least until he had told her the story, which he did with more than a few interruptions by Sir Didymus--especially when it came to retelling their battle in the Goblin City.

> Afterwards, Sarah just sat in the bed, stunned. How that horrid Goblin King from her adventure years ago could be the same man who was so generous to her just this morning...

> "My ears have been burning nonstop for the past hour. Your friends must have filled in the details of our earlier encounter." Sarah looked toward the source of the unexpected voice to find the Goblin King standing proudly in the doorway, his arms folded across his chest. "Perhaps now you understand my perplexity that you chose to call on me last night," he said as he strode assuredly into the room, ignoring the defensive repositioning of Sarah's friends about her bed and Hoggle's warning that he not "do anything to harm the 'little lady' even more."

> "Come now, Hoggle." Hoggle was taken aback at the correct pronunciation of his name. "Why would I have let you come visit Sarah--or even let you know she was here in the first place--if I wished her harm?" Hoggle didn't have an answer to that, but he also didn't move from his position between Jareth and Sarah. The Goblin King ignored his defensive posturing, turning to address Sarah instead. "Whenever you are ready to talk about last night, just have a goblin lead you to the garden by the stables. I'll be waiting." With that, he turned and walked out of the room.

> As soon as they could no longer hear boots clicking along the hallway, Hoggle turned to Sarah. "I wouldn't trust him as far as I could throw him, and I can't throw too far."

> Sarah smiled at the truism, but bid her friends to leave so she could get dressed, which they did only reluctantly and after offering many unsolicited warnings not to trust the Goblin King. Try as she might, Sarah could not remember for herself what had

happened those many years ago, though, and the events that had been related to her, although told with much liveliness and emotion, struck her the same as would being told the atomic weight of hydrogen--just more information with which, try as she might, she felt no personal connection. Still, she forced herself to smile warmly at her friends as they departed, promising to remember, if not necessarily take to heart, their obviously well-intentioned advice.

Part 3

Half an hour later, Sarah was following a rotund goblin that she had happened upon in the hallway outside her room to her meeting with the Goblin King. The path they were following was lined with rows upon rows of flowers, most species of which struck Sarah as completely foreign. The air was fresh and just the right temperature for a brisk walk--not too hot that she would become sticky with the physical exertion but not so cool that she needed additional clothing when she paused to examine in detail a particularly spectacular floral specimen. It wasn't long at all, with such beautiful scenery to watch along the way, before Sarah finally arrived at the appointed meeting place and her goblin guide scurried away before being detained further. She looked around the garden. Four neat rows of hedges, each about 40 feet long, sheltered the garden. Inside the box they made, topiary masterpieces representative of what Sarah supposed to be the inhabitants of this land were scattered about, providing shade and also relief from the relative flatness of the flower beds. For their lack of vertical variety, though, the beds were magnificent. The fullness of color dazzled Sarah, and overcome with the beauty, she sat down heavily on a cement bench in the center of it all.

> "Are you enjoying my garden?"

> Sarah turned around, trying to locate the Goblin King in all the dazzling beauty around her. He stepped through the entryway and into the garden, moving to join Sarah at the bench in the middle of the garden. Straddling the bench to face her directly, the Goblin King continued. "I hope I didn't rush you too much with your friends. I'm not very patient, I'm afraid." His candid manner contradicted everything against which Hoggle's warnings had sought to prepare Sarah.

> "No, that was fine. I'm rather impatient myself to find out what happened last night," Sarah explained, jumping the conversation past any idle pleasantries.

> Jareth frowned. "I came when you cried out for me. You were desperate that I help free you from an attacker, so I turned him into a goblin. Afterward, you were still hysterical, so I brought you here. That's it. How you came to be in that situation, I don't know."

> "No peaches were involved?" asked Sarah, remembering Hoggle's story of the last time.

> "Why? Would you like one?" Jareth pulled a peach out of the air and offered it to Sarah. Sarah adamantly shook her head, so Jareth instead took a bite out of it himself, chewing slowly, waiting for Sarah to make the next move.

> "I want to go home now."

> "I can only return you to where I first found you. Will you know where to go from there?"

> Sarah didn't think so, but with Hoggle and Didymus's warnings ringing in her head, her guard was up at this delay. "I can at least try. Maybe once I return, my memory will come back."

> "As you wish," sighed Jareth. Before Sarah knew anything was happening, they were standing in a dirty wooden shack. Sarah looked slowly around her as Jareth stood off to the side, watching her closely. A large hunting knife lay on the floor where it had been dropped the night before, and at the sight of it Sarah began to shake uncontrollably. Clamping her eyes shut and turning away, Sarah willed her body back under control, and the shaking slowly subsided. After a few minutes, Sarah reopened her eyes and rushed toward the door leading outside, bumping her leg against a low, dirty metal cot in her haste. Ignoring the pain which shot up her leg, Sarah lunged for the door and threw herself through, gulping in the fresh air outside of that musty cabin. Feeling slightly better for the change of scenery, Sarah looked around, dismayed that nothing but a dense forest was in sight. She tried to listen for the sounds of cars or any of the other myriad sounds of civilization, but only the chirping of birds and the rustling of leaves broke the silence. 'How did I end up here in the first place?' she wondered.

> "I think what you are looking for is over there." Jareth had followed her out of the cabin, and was now pointing at something.

> Sarah walked over to where he was standing and looked in the indicated direction. A beaten-up, rusty Chevrolet from the early 70's sat parked in a clearing, a path beyond it presumably leading to a public road. Sarah walked over to the path, trying to judge how long it was. Seeing no end to it, she walked back to the car, looking for a way inside. She had no clue how to hot-wire a car, but once inside she might be able to find a set of keys in the glove box or above the visor. The doors were locked, however, and Sarah realized that even if she did get out of the woods, she had no idea where to go next. None of this was helping to restore her locked-up memories. Her violent reaction to the knife inside the cabin had confirmed Jareth's explanation of the previous night but provided her with no clues about what she should do next. "I don't know," she admitted finally. "Nothing here is triggering any memories."

> "You can remain my guest until your memory returns," offered Jareth, "or you can stay here and try to find your way. Either way, I must be going. As tedious as goblins are, it's best not to leave them alone for too long." Jareth casually walked back toward the cabin, leaving Sarah in a minor panic. Despite the warnings of the dwarf, the fox and the beast, this man had been gracious and attentive to Sarah, helping her more than anyone to solve the mystery of her lost memory. And she had chosen to call him last night when she desperately needed help--not the three characters who had visited her that morning--so he couldn't be as horrible as their stories suggested.

> "Wait!" Jareth stopped walking away and turned around. "I...I can't go back," Sarah faltered. "What if my memory never returns?"

> "Sarah, Sarah, Sarah," sighed Jareth. "Life contains no certainties. You must make your decision and stick with it. Worry alone will get you nowhere."

> Sarah stuck out her chin defiantly. "I'll stay here, then. I'll find my way out of here, and I'll find my memory, too."

> "Good," replied Jareth simply, and he resumed walking away, fading as he did so.

> "Wait!" cried Sarah. Jareth stopped again, fading back

into substance.

> "What now, Sarah?" he asked impatiently.

> At his brusque manner, Sarah balked. "Nothing."

> Jareth sighed and walked over, his tone conciliatory. "It was obviously something. I don't read minds, though. You'll have to tell me what you're thinking."

> Something about that struck Sarah as odd. "Don't you?"

> "Don't I what? Read minds?" Sarah nodded. "Most people are painfully transparent and quite simple to anticipate."

> "Then why don't you simply anticipate what's on my mind?" challenged Sarah.

> "After what happened during our last encounter, I wouldn't presume."

> Sarah paused to reflect on his answer. From what Hoggle had told her, she had bested Jareth at his own game. Maybe there was truth to his words. Sarah decided to capitulate and ask what had been nagging at her. "Can't you stay here awhile longer? Why must you leave right now?"

> "A thousand and one reasons, Sarah, not the least of which I have a kingdom to which to attend."

> "Then you won't stay." It was more a statement than a question, but Jareth chose to answer it anyway.

> "Why should I? You haven't wished for me to stay." At Sarah's sudden cheer, Jareth added, "Remember, Sarah, be careful what you wish for. I cannot give without taking something in return. The price may be higher than you want to pay."

> "Oh. Well, what would you ask in return for staying with me?"

> "I can't tell you that now. You must choose for yourself whether the risk is worth the return. I may simply be satisfied with monopolizing your company for the next couple of hours. I may ask for what you don't think you can give, but will have to part with anyway."

> Sarah paused to think. "Do I have to decide right now?"

> "I'm at your service as you command me, but the level of repayment goes up with each passing hour." He paused, waiting for Sarah to say something. When she didn't, he said a simple goodbye and walked away, fading out as he did so. When Sarah could see him no more, she was struck by a strong sense of desolation. She almost called out to him right then, but her pride got the better of her. Instead, she turned toward the path which hopefully led to civilization. "Come on feet. We have places to go, people to see," she said with a lightness betraying the heaviness in her heart. And with that, she began down the path, to where and to whom she did not know.

Part 4

"She went home, Hogbrain," repeated Jareth for the third time, a dangerous glint in his eye. He didn't take kindly to having his answers questioned.

> Hoggle wasn't satisfied, and he pressed to see Sarah. He knew he had more leeway with the King than most, given that he was Sarah's friend, and he was determined to take full advantage of it,

especially since Sarah's safety was the matter at hand.

> Giving in with a sigh, the Goblin King produced a crystal ball, tossing it lightly to the nagging dwarf. Hoggle held it gingerly, for Jareth's crystal balls could be anything from a blessing to a curse. Hoggle, for one, didn't intend to be caught off guard. Still, all his wariness was quickly forgotten as an image of Sarah coalesced inside the crystal sphere. She was walking down a dark, wooded path that Hoggle didn't recognize. Just because it wasn't familiar to him, though, didn't mean it wasn't a part of the Labyrinth. No one knew every corner of the Labyrinth--it was too big. "That don't look like Sarah's home to me," said the dwarf.

> Jareth held back an almost overwhelming urge to punt the troublesome dwarf into the middle of a Firey patch, contenting himself instead with an angry glare. "Go ahead and search the entire Labyrinth if you don't believe me," he said evenly, "but you know the rules. You cannot go directly to Sarah unless she calls on you."

> "Bah," grumbled Hoggle, not knowing what else to say.

> "I warn you, Hedgewart." Jareth leaned close to the dwarf, the better to menace him. "The rules of the Labyrinth are not to be broken, and any truce between us will be forgotten the moment you transgress them." Jareth leaned back into his throne. "And where would you be then? Certainly in no position to help your friend," sneered Jareth.

> The dwarf looked at the king sullenly, but he had no counteroffensive to offer. Beaten, he departed the throne room, the crystal still in hand, determined to search for Sarah in all the nooks and crannies of the Labyrinth.

> Jareth watched him depart, then pulled out another crystal in which to view Sarah's progress. So far, things had gone nicely to plan, but the next phase would have to be entered soon if things were to remain on track. Jareth smiled as, inside the crystal, the image of Sarah startled at a sudden sound. It wouldn't be long at all.

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Part 5

Sarah was miserable. At first she had spent the time planning what she would do once she reached civilization. Jareth had said her name was Sarah Williams, and the dwarf had called the baby brother she had chased after all those years ago Toby. When she got out of here, she only had to find a Toby Williams. That was assuming Williams wasn't her married name, of course. She had held her hands in front of her, looking for any symbol that she was married. To her relief, none of the rings on her fingers struck her as matrimonial. She had been walking for hours, though, and boredom soon took over after she had planned her return to civilization to the best of her memory-impaired ability. The path she had started out on led only to more abandoned paths. She must have taken a wrong turn somewhere, but try as she might, she couldn't hear anything but the sounds of the forest to guide her. She was hungry, her feet ached, and too late she wished that she had simply smashed in a window of that car when she had the chance. Anything would be better than walking alone like this. Even paying the Goblin King's price would have been worth the company these past few hours.

> She thought about it. He had warned her that the

payment expected in return for his services would only inflate with passing time. Still, only a few hours had passed, and in a best-case scenario he wouldn't yet want anything too terrific. She jumped as she heard more rustling in the bushes. She was becoming quite paranoid, especially as the available light began to dim. She didn't have anything with which to make a fire, and she didn't want to spend the night alone in the woods, with who knew what hiding in the trees. More rustling came from the trees, closer than before. That decided Sarah. "I wish the Goblin King were here right now."

> Mere seconds passed before Sarah felt a cool breeze on her back. She turned around and there he stood, magnificent in a white, feathery jacket, tight breeches and a beguiling smile. "And what does m'Lady wish of me?" he inquired politely.

> Her immense relief at seeing him standing there, so calm and regal, prompted her to run to him and throw her arms around him before she could think of the propriety of her actions. His own reaction was to encircle her in his own arms, holding her protectively until she bashfully moved away. To hide her embarrassment, she quickly moved on to business. "I want you to take me out of here, to a town or something."

> The Goblin King's smile melted into a frown. "I'm afraid I cannot do that. I can return you to my kingdom, where you can stay as my guest, or I can keep you company here as you find your way. Anything more is not possible."

> Sarah's elation deflated a bit. "Then I wish you to keep me company until I get out of here."

> "Very well," agreed Jareth.

> Sarah looked around, not certain what to do next. She now had a companion to ease the loneliness, but she was still tired and hungry. Noticing her indecision, Jareth made his own suggestion. "Why don't you sit down and rest? You look like you could collapse any moment from exhaustion. And you're probably famished as well; eat this." He tossed a peach to Sarah.

> She rotated the peach in her hands, debating whether it was safe. Sure, he had himself bitten into the peach he had offered her earlier that day to no ill effect, but the peach from Hoggle's story had been drugged. She was famished, though, and even if she did ask for something different, it could just as easily be enchanted. What choice did she have? None, she decided, biting into the peach. It was delicious, and she finished it swiftly. Her stomach oddly full from so little food, the next pressing concern was her weariness. Jareth had summoned a fire, and its pleasant heat only increased her drowsiness. Staring into the mesmerizing flames, Sarah quietly asked Jareth what price she was going to have to pay for all of this.

> "Don't worry about it now," he soothed. "Just go to sleep." And she did.

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Part 6

Sarah dreamed of a ball, full of people in fancy dress. She herself was decked out in a white gown with a full skirt and white, satin gloves that came up to her elbows. She imagined that she looked quite lovely, for the other dancers kept staring at her as she moved about the room. She was searching, but for what she didn't know. Suddenly, she saw Jareth across the room, staring at her himself. It was then she realized she had been searching for him. The object of her search

known, her efforts became more frantic. By the time she reached where he had been standing, though, he was elsewhere, dancing with some woman, both of their faces hidden behind masks. She struggled again to pass through the crowd, only to again arrive too late, the spot he had occupied only moments before vacant. She was about to cry in frustration and disappointment, not caring how the tears ruined her face, when a hand rested upon her shoulder and gently spun her around. It was Jareth. He took her into his arms, and they danced across the floor, staring deeply into each others eyes. She was awed that such an important person as he would choose to dance with her, a mere girl, especially when every woman at the ball was begging for his attention. Swaying in his arms, the music cascading down, she felt that every dream she had ever dreamed was complete at this moment. Suddenly, she was overcome with an irrational fear. She couldn't place it's source, but she pushed away from him, a hurt expression clouding his face. It was like claustrophobia--she had to get out of there. It didn't matter how or why, she just had to find an exit. In her hysteria, she grabbed a close-by chair and flung it against the wall, shattering it into a thousand pieces...

> And woke up, sweating profusely and very upset, at what she did not know. She looked at the fire, still burning brightly. Beyond its flames, she could see the Goblin King looking at her, wearing an expression full of concern. "Did you have bad dreams?" he asked.

> Staring at him, the dream still fresh in her memory and wondering what role he had played in her life, Sarah finally answered. "No. Just a strange dream." She sat up, sleep no longer tugging at her. Jareth watched silently, not asking her to elaborate but not changing the subject either. Sarah continued. "I was at a ball, and you were there too. At first I didn't know what I was doing, but then I saw you... We danced together, but something happened and ended it all." She looked at him, wondering what it meant.

> "You must be starting to get your memory back," was his reply.

> "You mean that really happened?"

> "Yes."

> Sarah was confused. What they had shared in that ballroom, dancing in each other's arms...well, it just didn't fit in to what she had been told by the dwarf. "When did that happen?"

> "During your last visit. Your friends probably didn't tell you about it because they never knew about it themselves. It had been my last attempt to enchant you, giving you your dreams."

> Once again, Sarah didn't know how to respond to his disarming candor. It went against everything she had been told about the Goblin King. "You almost succeeded," she admitted.

> "Did I?" he laughed. "Well, it's a moot point now. That game is over."

> "And are we playing another game right now?" Sarah asked.

> "Of course. I told you, I don't give without taking."

> Sarah hugged her knees and stared into the fire. "Who's winning?"

> Jareth laughed again. "The last time we matched wits, I thought I was winning until the very end. I don't want to repeat my

mistake of overconfidence this time. I will say, Sarah, that you are my favorite adversary."

> A rustling started up again in the trees near their encampment, breaking Sarah's reverie. Even Jareth turned towards the sound, curious as to its cause. After a few seconds, silence returned, disturbed only by the busy crackling of the fire. "That's been going on all day," remarked Sarah, alarmed at the mysterious sound but at the same time comforted by Jareth's presence. Jareth made no direct reply, suggesting instead that she try and get more sleep. As she laid back down, Sarah wondered at how at ease she felt around this man, despite the warnings to keep her guard up around him. Even he warned that she should treat him with caution, yet something inside her fought against all the advice. As sleep slowly reclaimed her, she wondered at her curious reaction to the Goblin King.

> As soon as Sarah had drifted off, a worried look came over Jareth, and he stood up and walked over to the trees where the rustling had come from earlier. Peering closely into the darkness, he spotted a short, dark shape standing motionless, half-hidden behind a tree trunk. "Ah, it's you. Still stalking your prey, I see." Jareth pondered what to do. If he let the goblin-rapist go, he would be able to dispatch of it later, when Sarah was awake and win him further points with her. He didn't like having random variables running amok in the middle of his carefully laid plans, though. Sighing, Jareth squatted down, gently coaxing the goblin to come forward. The goblin refused to move. His short patience exhausted, Jareth let anger guide his next move. "Fine, if you refuse to obey the Goblin King, you stupid goblin, the consequence you will pay!" A crystal ball materialized in Jareth's hand, and he threw it at the unlucky goblin. It trapped the squealing wretch, transporting him off for a quick dip in the Bog of Eternal Stench before setting him in his new home: under a bridge in one of the more remote corners of the Labyrinth.

> That loose end resolved, Jareth turned back to resume his watch over the sleeping Sarah. It wouldn't do to let the prize be stolen from underneath his nose when victory was so near.
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Part 7

A cacophony of birdsong woke up Sarah. She stretched luxuriantly, her eyes popping open when her hand brushed a soft pile of leaves. She had forgotten that she was in a forest. Sitting up, she propped her hands behind her, the pain of stiff muscles reminding her that she had nothing but hard ground to sleep on the previous night. "Here, drink this." A cup of dark, steaming liquid was thrust in front of her face. Her nose alerted her to the fact that the mystery liquid was hot chocolate, and she sat forward, eagerly moving around her hand to grasp the cup, remembering too late her stiffness and grimacing at the pain. As Sarah took the cup in both hands, slowly raising the dark liquid to her lips, Jareth turned his attention to massaging the circulation back into her stiff muscles. Between the chocolate and Jareth's skilled hands moving over her back and shoulders, Sarah felt she was in heaven.

> Too soon, the chocolate was finished and the massage ended. Jareth helped her to her feet then waited patiently for her to lead the way. Sarah started off in the direction she had been traveling the previous day, knowing that if nothing else, she would eventually come to the edge of the forest if she kept walking straight in one direction. They walked along in companionable silence

for a mile, before Sarah started up a conversation.

> "Would you really have turned Toby into a goblin?"

> "Maybe. Who knows what could have been? Turning children who are casually wished away into goblins is what a Goblin King does."

> "What about me? What if I had lost?"

> "Once again, Sarah, I cannot tell you what might have been, had the past happened differently than it did. No one knows."

> Sarah lapsed into quiet thought. "What if I lose this time? What will happen to me?"

> "Are you admitting defeat?"

> "No. I don't even know the game."

> "Then be patient," he admonished. "Time will tell, if that future comes to pass."

> "Do you want me to lose?" At his curious expression, she clarified, "You seem to be helping me, not working against me."

> "Things aren't always what they appear," he evaded. "And I'm quite intent on winning this time."

> "What did you offer me last time?" pressed Sarah.

> "What didn't I offer you," sighed Jareth. And then, in an annoyed tone, "Must we really continue this line of conversation. It's still rather a sore subject with me. You were, and still are, the only person to beat my labyrinth."

> "From what I've been told, I didn't have a choice," retorted Sarah. "It was either that, or lose my baby brother forever."

> "If he was that dear to you, you shouldn't have wished him into my realm in the first place," replied the Goblin King, annoyance still coloring his words.

> Having no actual memory of the incident, Sarah couldn't come up with a suitable reply, so she settled instead on an annoyed silence. After a few minutes of it, Sarah followed a new line of thought. "If our last encounter was so unpleasant, why did you come to my rescue this time?"

> "And miss the chance to settle old scores? Besides, I was rather astonished that you chose to call on me in your hour of need. Given our history, it didn't make sense."

> "So you really don't know?"

> "Why you called on me? No. But then, it's not the first thing you've done that has taken me by surprise. And that is a rare ability indeed, to surprise the Goblin King."

> "And that's why you won't tell me what game we're playing. If I knew, I might beat you again."

> "Or," suggested the Goblin King helpfully, "guessing the nature of the game might be an important part of the game."

> "Why are you giving me all these hints?" wondered Sarah aloud.

> "They could just as easily be obfuscations." Sarah couldn't measure the truth in his words, his face too perfectly composed, his voice too rational and even. Busy trying to figure out the mystery Jareth presented, Sarah didn't see the tree root sticking

out in the path and tripped over it, twisting her ankle painfully.

> Jareth was at her side almost instantaneously, gently easing off her boot and sock. Tenderly, he examined the ankle with expert care. Sarah could see the ankle swell even as he held it and knew the prognosis wouldn't be good. She winced in pain as he touched the ligaments, trying to determine the extent of the damage. "You worry that I'm too helpful, and then go and sabotage yourself. You're either a very mixed-up woman, or so frightfully clever that even I can't see the purpose behind it all," joked Jareth, breaking the nervous and frustrated tension that had gripped Sarah. Jareth carefully put down her foot and stood. "See if you can stand on it," he ordered. Sarah reached her hands toward him for help in standing. Jareth put them around his neck and grasped her in his arms, so that by the time Sarah was up and balancing on her one foot, they were engaged in a very intimate position. It felt good, and Sarah was disappointed when Jareth disengaged himself. Everybody's--including Jareth's--warnings aside, Sarah really liked the Goblin King. He was generous, attentive, incredibly handsome...everything a man should be, reflected Sarah as she gingerly tested her weight on the injured ankle.

> The pain was incredible, and she would have fallen to the ground, her balance lost, had Jareth not caught her. As it was, tears filled her eyes. The agony was incredible. Jareth carefully grabbed up her legs and lowered her back down onto the ground. "You're not going to get anywhere on that ankle. The question is, do you want to convalesce here in the woods, hoping that somebody will run across you and you can finally go home, or back at my castle?"

> Distracted by the pain, it took Sarah a moment to comprehend the question. "You'll stay here with me, won't you?" she asked apprehensively.

> "Of course. It's as you wished."

> "Then I'd like to stay for now. Maybe it will feel better in a few hours."

> "In that case, I'm going to fetch a doctor." At her worried expression, he added, "I'll be gone only a few minutes," before disappearing completely.

> Sarah sat on the ground, trying to remain as still as a rock. Rocks...why did rocks seem important, almost special? Sarah shook her head, accidentally moving her leg. The pain which flared up in her ankle pushed away any more thoughts of rocks as Sarah struggled to remain calm. Where was Jareth?

> Almost that soon, the Goblin King reappeared in the company of a white-haired goblin wearing half-moon spectacles. 'The doctor,' she realized, suppressing a giggle at his stereotypical appearance.

> "So, my dear, I hear you have a problem with your ankle." Sarah nodded her head, somewhat amazed, not having heard such an articulate goblin before. "Well, why don't you just relax while I look at it, okay? Your Highness," he said, directing his words to the waiting Goblin King, "why don't you talk with the lady's head while I mess about down here at her feet. We don't want one end of her getting jealous at all the attention the other end is receiving, do we?" Sarah had to smile at the goblin-doctor's corny bedside manner.

> "So, how is your memory coming along? Have you remembered anything aside from that ball where you shattered my crystal?" Sarah wondered how upset he could be, when every time he mentioned their last encounter, he seemed to be teasing her.

> "No, not really." She paused. "Something about rocks seemed important a few minutes ago, but I don't know."

> "Rocks? Hmm. Your friend Ludo, I believe, counts rocks as his 'friends.' And I do seem to remember an unexpected rush of rocks turning the tide in the battle at the Goblin City," Jareth frowned.

> Sarah frowned too. Hoggle and Sir Didymus had recounted that to her yesterday. It probably wasn't anything that she had remembered herself, just something that she had been told.

"Oh--ow!"

> "Sorry, my dear," came an apologetic voice from her 'other end.' "I'm afraid there's another one coming, though. Can't be helped."

> Sarah tried to see what the goblin-doctor was doing, but the other one came before she could position herself to peer around Jareth. "OW!" she yelled. Then more quietly, she began to recite a string of expletives under her breath, her eyes tightly screwed shut with the pain. As she struggled with the pain, Jareth whispered soothing words to her, running his hand through her hair. The throbbing in her ankle finally died away and it became enveloped in a cool numbness instead. Opening her teary eyes, Sarah looked to see what the goblin-doctor had done. A red poultice had been smeared around her ankle, on top of which the goblin-doctor was now applying a protective covering of leaves. After a moment, he noticed his patient's watchful eyes trained upon him, and he began to speak.

> "This should keep down the swelling and numb the pain for you, providing you don't go and hurt it further. Just because my medicine makes it feel better for the moment, you shouldn't be gallivanting about on this ankle. In fact, I don't want you to put any weight on it at all for the next day. Keep the ankle dry, and when it starts to hurt again...well, Your Highness, you know how to get a hold of me." With that, the goblin-doctor stood up and began to gather his supplies into a little ragtag cloth bag. When he was finished, he patiently stood off to the side of the clearing, waiting until his king was ready to send him back home. With a quick word to Sarah, the Goblin King went to attend to him, the two of them quickly disappearing and leaving Sarah once again alone.

> Sarah tried to sit quietly on the ground, but curiosity over the goblin-doctor's ministrations finally got the better of her. Carefully, she lifted up her leg with her hands and brought the foot up to her torso before gently settling it back down. She then proceeded to pick and poke at the poultice, smelling the bits that came off on her fingers. It was a complete mystery to her, and try as she might, she couldn't figure out the ingredients. Strong as her curiosity was, though, it was quickly forgotten as she heard the sound of a distant car horn off to her right. At first startled, excitement grew within her as she realized what it meant. Trying not to breath and straining her ears to pick up even the slightest noise, she could just make out the steady rumble of a car engine before it soon passed out of her range of hearing. Still, she had pinpointed the direction it came from, and when Jareth finally reappeared, the goblin-doctor attended to, her excitement almost made her incomprehensible as she told him of her discovery.

> Jareth listened quietly, his face an impenetrable mask. When Sarah finished, he offered himself as a crutch, so she could

travel one-legged in the direction of her discovery. With each hop, a dull throb pulsed through the ankle. Still, the pain was manageable, and in her excitement Sarah would have even tried walking on it despite the goblin-doctors orders had Jareth not prevented it. As they got closer and closer to their destination, Sarah began to hear more noise. By the time night fell again, they hadn't traveled much more than a mile. Only when Sarah finally agreed to stop for the day did she realize how badly her ankle hurt and how tired and hungry she was. The fire had been going not even five minutes before Sarah sank into a troubled sleep.
> <p>

Part 8

Sarah was at her parents home, sitting at the vanity which sat in her old room there. In the mirror she noticed that her stuffed bear was missing from its usual place on her wall. Anger welled up inside her and she stomped out of her room and into her half-brother's. Sure enough, the bear was there, thrown carelessly onto the floor. Sarah picked up the stuffed bear, her concern for that inanimate object far outweighing any for the crying baby. The annoying, loud, screaming baby. Frustrated, Sarah put down the bear and picked up the baby, full of anger. She talked to it, threatened it, pleaded for it to be quiet. Finally, she called upon the goblins to take it away...

> Sarah tossed fitfully in her sleep as she dreamed her entire adventure in the Labyrinth. Jareth watched her closely, his usual frown upon his lips. When she awoke, she would remember everything, her amnesia lifted. And then he would finally have his satisfaction.
> <p>

Part 9

The look in Sarah's eyes when she awoke immediately confirmed that the amnesia was gone. Jareth had expected no less, though. It was something else that the Goblin King was searching for as he looked deep into Sarah's bright eyes as she struggled to sit up without jarring her injured ankle.

> "Why?" Her gaze would have bored holes through him, if it could, such was the intensity of it.

> "Why what?" He responded almost breezily, betraying the gravity of Sarah's question. Still, she wasn't deterred for a second. She knew who it was that stood above her.

> "Why all of this? What is this about, Jareth? Why have you been so kind to me? What is your price for all of this?"

> "What have you learned these past few days, Sarah?" His tone was alarmingly gentle.

> The question caught her off guard, and she was silent a few moments before answering. "That..." Sarah trailed off, hesitant to continue.

> "Go on. I'm listening." Once again, his tone was lighter than what the situation called for.

> Not I'm waiting, thought Sarah, but I'm listening.

"That you're not just some evil being. That you can be kind and caring. That there's more to you than I gave you credit for, all those years ago." That I could fall in love with you truly, given half a chance, added Sarah to herself. There was no denying her feelings towards him these past few days--feelings that were allowed

to surface, because she wasn't busily pushing them back down with memories of the past. Almost as if he could read her mind--despite his earlier reassurances to the contrary--Jareth smiled widely just then.

> "Then my work here is done. The road is close-by now, and you should reach it on your own by nightfall. Goodbye, Sarah."

> That was it? But it was all coming to an end too fast. Sarah wanted--no, needed--to talk this out as they had been in the habit of talking everything else out these past couple of days. To have him explain himself in clear words, as he had been doing. In a fit of inspiration, Sarah remembered her words. "But what about my wish? You're supposed to keep me company until I'm out of this forest!"

> Jareth gazed at her steadily, letting the seconds tick by ponderously before replying, "Sarah, you have no power over me." And without a further word the Goblin King vanished, leaving Sarah confused and alone.

> <p>

The End

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End
file.